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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 002871

SIPDIS

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EUR FOR JOHN ROBINSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPANISH VIEWS IN ADVANCE OF NOVEMBER GAERC

REF: STATE 183545

MADRID 00002871 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Poloff met with Spanish Subdirector General for the EU Carlos Fernandez-Arias on November 8 to discuss Spain's position in advance of the November 13-14 GAERC meeting. Fernandez-Arias indicated that Spain was in complete agreement with the United States on most topics, but he singled out Kosovo, Russia and Israel as areas where he wished to clarify Spanish position. Fernandez-Arias also reported that the GAERC would be discussing the possibility of an increased EU role in Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

//KOSOVO//

¶2. (C) As he has in previous conversations, Fernandez-Arias emphasized that Spain does not see the same need for urgency as the U.S. in Kosovo. He indicated that Kosovo would be a chief subject of the GAERC because UN SE Ahtisaari will attend. Fernandez-Arias agreed with much of the U.S. position, especially on security issues, and he stressed that the EU and NATO should have an overlap in Kosovo to make sure the transition goes smoothly.

//SERBIA//

¶3. (C) Spain agrees with the U.S. position on Serbia, but Fernandez-Arias cautioned that the GOS will probably offer Serbia more carrot than stick because it fears that a lack of Serbian progress will lead to Serbia's radicalization.

//RUSSIA//

¶4. (C) Spain shares the U.S. view on Russia. Fernandez-Arias said that it is difficult for the EU and Russia to work together in Russia's backyard - Transnistria, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia - because the Russians become extremely suspicious of EU motives. As such, Spain is advocating increased cooperation with Russia over the horizon, such as in Darfur, in order to build mutual confidence in addressing the issues closer to home. He acknowledged the Jekyll-Hyde nature of the EU-Russian relationship and said that the EU is seeking to maintain an equilibrium in controlling its "difficult neighbor" while working together with its "important economic partner."

//MEPP//

¶5. (C) Emboff and Fernandez-Arias met shortly after the Spanish MFA issued a communique condemning the Israeli bombardment in Beit Hanun. Fernandez-Arias noted that all of

the U.S. points in reftel were correct but that there was something missing, which was the need for Israel to show restraint in defending itself. Spain recognizes Israel's right to defend itself and will continue to call for the cessation of Palestinian rocket attacks and the release of the captured soldier, but they will also continue to call on Israel to exercise restraint in defending itself. Fernandez-Arias added that the EU is giving clear instructions to the Palestinian Authority on what it needs to do in order to receive EU assistance.

//LEBANON//

¶6. (C) Fernandez-Arias emphasized the need for all nations - Syria, Lebanon, and Israel - to respect Lebanon's sovereign borders. On disarming Hizballah, he said it was difficult to be optimistic because disarmament would be a lengthy and complicated process. He repeated his past statement that Spain would accept a disarmed Hizballah as a viable political entity in Lebanon, though disarmament seems unlikely.

//IRAN//

¶7. (C) Fernandez-Arias said that the GAERC would not address Iran again until December, as the issue is before the Security Council and nothing of significance has changed.

//DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO//

¶8. (C) Fernandez-Arias said that the Spanish mission in Congo is nearing its conclusion, and that the Spanish government considers its work completed. He said that the Spanish might stay a few days longer than originally scheduled if only to make an orderly withdrawal. Emboff asked whether it seemed possible for another European force to replace the Spanish contingent. Fernandez-Arias noted the presence of a French over-the-horizon force but did not

MADRID 00002871 002.2 OF 002

think this was likely. He emphasized the expiring Spanish congressional mandate for peacekeeping operations and indicated that Spanish troops were needed elsewhere.

//UZBEKISTAN//

¶9. (C) The GAERC will not be discussing Uzbekistan, according to Fernandez-Arias, but he offered that Spain agrees completely with the U.S. position.

//CUBA//

¶10. (C) The GAERC will not be discussing Cuba, according to Fernandez-Arias, but he mentioned that the EU is planning a short-to-mid-term strategy on Cuba. He expressed concern about human rights in Cuba but also noted a recent trip of Deputy FM Bernardino Leon to Havana, in which Leon met with Cuban dissidents. The visit resulted in the refusal of Cuban FM Perez Roque to meet with Spanish FM Moratinos, as well as the exclusion of Spanish diplomats from official Cuban events in Havana. Fernandez-Arias echoed statements by other MFA contacts in saying that Spain does not want to sacrifice its ability to engage with the Cuban government.

//ADDITIONAL ITEMS//

¶11. (C) Lastly, Fernandez-Arias offered two other areas that would be discussed at this GAERC: a meeting of defense ministers on capacity development for the ESPD and a discussion spearheaded by the Spanish and the Dutch on how the EU can play a larger role in Afghanistan. Spain and the Netherlands will propose a more serious commitment for the EU in police and judicial training as well as institution building.

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AGUIRRE